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Letter dated 19 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on a special event entitled "Two years in the Security Council: how did we perform?", which took place on 11 December at the Council of the Americas and was carried out jointly by the Colombian Mission and the International Peace Academy.

I should like to request, Sir, that the aforementioned document be published as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alfonso **Valdivieso**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 19 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Two years in the Security Council: how did we perform?

Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations/International Peace Academy
December 2002

As part of Colombia's presidency of the Security Council, an event entitled "Two Years in the Security Council: How did We Perform?" will take place during the morning of Wednesday, 11 December 2002. The present document contains the terms of reference of the event, organized by the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations with the support of the International Peace Academy.

Objective

The main goal is to facilitate a substantive and candid exchange of views on the performance of the Security Council. Through leading presentations and discussion of selected strategic issues, the event aims at identifying lessons learned; confronting the political and operational dilemmas of the Council; and designing a strategic vision for this organ as a central component of the United Nations system. The meeting should have the potential to contribute effectively to a results-based approach in the Security Council as it discharges its responsibility of preserving peace and international security.

Scope

The selected time frame for this exercise is the period 2001-2002. The issues that will constitute the basis for the discussion are specific and prominent in the current agenda of the Council and will be introduced by outgoing members of the Council. The scope of the exchange will be targeted specifically at the performance of the Security Council as a standing institution and should include perspectives on the quality, opportunity, limitations and effectiveness of its actions, omissions and policy orientations.

Participants

This activity is related to the work of the Security Council. Consequently, the Mission of Colombia will extend invitations to the 15 members of the Council represented at the ambassadorial level; the five recently elected members represented at the same level; the Secretary-General, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Michael Doyle, and the Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations.

Methodology

David Malone from the International Peace Academy will serve as Chair. The meeting will begin with a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of

Colombia. The exchange of views will be preceded by brief presentations by some outgoing Council members as outlined below. At the end, Michael Doyle will sum up the main issues raised during the morning.

Selected issues

The following issues have been selected because of their political importance for the international community in recent years and their ability and potential to shape the work of the Council in the immediate future:

1. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (to be presented by Jagdish Koonjul);

2. Mandates (to be presented by Kishore Mahbubani);

3. The Broader Issue of Terrorism (to be presented by Alfonso Valdivieso).

Outcome

The Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations and the International Peace Academy will prepare and distribute a report of the meeting.

Enclosure

The role of the Security Council in establishing and supporting United Nations peace operations

Wednesday, 11 December 2002
Council of the Americas
680 Park Avenue, New York

On Wednesday, 11 December 2002, the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations, in collaboration with the International Peace Academy (IPA), convened an informal seminar bringing together members of the Security Council, senior representatives of the United Nations, the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs and a few distinguished and knowledgeable guests. The seminar, entitled "Two Years Into the Security Council: How Did We Perform?", discussed the role of mandates and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The present document records some of the issues and concerns that were raised during the seminar but is not intended to represent an agreed position of the participants or the organizers.

The Security Council has primary responsibility within the United Nations system for international peace and security. Implementing this responsibility in peace operations involves, inter alia, the establishment of the mandate by the Security Council and the selection of key personnel to lead the operation by the Secretary-General, both of which are key factors in the success of what the United Nations brings to any peace operation.

Mandates

By and large, the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) seems to have had a positive impact on the Council's handling of mandates. In resolution 1327 (2000), the Council pledged to adhere to the key recommendations of the report — most importantly the formulation of clear, credible and achievable mandates. Such mandates should provide for a credible deterrent capability, should contain a clear political objective and should set benchmarks for the mission (including an exit strategy).

The reality has not always matched these high standards. In particular, some participants argued that the Council's recent performance in some areas, most notably in Africa, leaves much to be desired. Five key areas of concern were identified.

First, several Council representatives pointed out their inadequate knowledge of the situation on the ground. Even some well-resourced missions of the five permanent Members at times rely on the Secretariat for detailed and timely analysis, assessment and recommendations. One ambassador sympathized with the dilemma the Secretariat consistently faces in such situations: how to paint a realistic picture of the situation on the ground without scaring off potential troop-contributing countries. From a military standpoint, it makes sense to include worst-

case scenarios, but this may lead to conservative recommendations for peace operations that are dead on arrival in the Council. At the same time, political pressures may require the Council to adopt mandates urgently without the informed input of the Secretariat — such was the case of resolution 1244 (1999) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for example. This partly explains the difficulties confronted when trying to implement this mandate on the ground.

Second, the United Nations is rarely in a position to pick and choose its missions. Despite the Brahimi report's recommendations on saying no to impossible missions, the United Nations is nevertheless driven by a fear of being marginalized by other actors. For this reason, it will, on occasion, accept missions about which it might otherwise be circumspect. UNMIK represents such a case. In other situations, the Council may be pressed for political reasons to establish a mission in the face of extremely adverse conditions on the ground. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the United Nations mandated a mission of around 8,000 troops for a territory that is about 200 times larger than Kosovo, where approximately 50,000 troops are deployed. Nevertheless, the Council and the Secretariat feared a refusal to establish the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) would undermine the fragile peace process and the Council's credibility on African issues.

Third, even the best mandate is worthless if Council members are not prepared to support them through the allocation of adequate resources. In addition to troops, this comprises financial resources and political leadership. The **financial aspects** of a mission are always present in the minds of Council members but generally remain unspoken. With respect to the very high costs of MONUC, currently totalling around $54 million per month, one ambassador noted that what counts most for his country are not the absolute costs of a mission but "what results we get on the ground for our money".

Political leadership is as important as financial resources. This highlights the desirability of countries inside or outside the Council assuming a "godfather role" for any given operation mandated by the United Nations, through the provision of troops or through political coordination. It was noted that the failure of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) prior to its new mandate in 1999 was not a function of a flawed mandate but of a commitment gap. Once a lead State — in this case the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland — assumed a driving role in strengthening UNAMSIL, the situation was turned around. Australia played a similar role when the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) paved the ground for the deployment of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Less forthright leadership (including the safety net of potential military intervention) to support a prospective United Nations mission in Burundi or Côte d'Ivoire (or to underpin a more substantial engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) explains the failure to engage meaningfully in any of these situations. At the same time, the troika formed by the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Portugal to give political direction to the United Nations presence in Angola met with only limited success.

While the support of outside powers was seen as crucial in implementing a Council mandate, the unwillingness of many industrialized countries to place their troops under United Nations command was lamented. This reflected the view,

articulated by one incoming non-permanent Council member, that "where robust military intervention is required, the United Nations can't do the job".

Fourth, the Council has to become more professional. One ambassador called for the introduction of "real management instead of paper management". He gave the Council particularly bad grades in following up after its initial deployment of a mission and in keeping a continued focus on what is happening on the ground. He noted that there has not yet been any joint effort between the Secretariat and the Council to determine why the results of MONUC had fallen short of expectations. Similar concerns were echoed by other Council members who called for the introduction of meaningful benchmarks, as well as the establishment of a reviewing mechanism for United Nations peacekeeping missions. One ambassador proposed that the Council manage its missions along the model of sanctions, establishing a committee for each operation. Such committees would allow the Council to stay more closely involved in the evolution of each mission.

Fifth, the Council faces political constraints in implementing an exit strategy. Although participants agreed on the need for any mandate to contain an exit strategy, it was pointed out that prevailing political constraints on the ground and at the international level sometimes prevent the Council from heeding this recommendation. Such was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the initial suggestions that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would withdraw its troops in 12 months was rightly abandoned when the local environment made this impossible. This underscored the need for exit strategies to be flexible and tied to the situation on the ground, rather than in the capitals of those supplying the troops and finances. One ambassador called for any exit to be followed by post-conflict peace-building efforts.

In the discussion about mandates, divergent views emerged on the **relationship between the permanent and the non-permanent members** of the Council. Several non-permanent members voiced their frustration over what they consider to be their limited influence on Council-mandated missions. Given the limited period that they serve on the Council, their involvement can only be partial and temporary. This situation is compounded, one ambassador argued, by the fact that mandates often emanate from agreements between the five permanent members. In this context, ambassadors from some of the 10 elected members referred to the mandate formulation process as "mystery" and "magic". The ambassador of one of the five permanent members countered that influence in mandating has more to do with "doing one's homework" and maintaining close and continuous relationships with the Secretariat and the United Nations presence on the ground.

One ambassador drew attention to the fact that some countries contributing considerable financial resources to United Nations missions are not permanently represented on the Council and are therefore denied much influence in the establishing of mandates or the performance review of peace operations.

A final area of discussion was the attempts over the past decade to address the concerns of **troop-contributing countries.** These countries had complained over many years that their views were not adequately taken into account in the formulation of mandates or in the planning of missions. In the early 1990s, that led to the establishment of a mechanism of regular consultations between the troop-contributing countries and the Security Council. Those meetings have turned out to be largely ineffective. Troop-contributing countries have consistently failed to use

the meetings to pass on their views to the Security Council and to provide meaningful input for the drafting of mandates. To some extent, a fruitful exchange of views seems to be hampered by the constraining formality of the meetings, which intimidated some troop-contributing countries and kept them from speaking up. (One Secretariat official noted that, while the relationship between troop-contributing countries and the Council might be difficult, there is an intense dialogue between troop-contributing countries individually and the Secretariat.) It was agreed that such meetings should be continued but that the structure needed to be changed to encourage a freer exchange of views. In any case, continuing the meetings ensure that there was at least a regular forum in which crises could be discussed as and when they arose.

Special Representatives of the Secretary-General

A second element that is important to the success of a peacekeeping operation is the Secretary-General's representation on the ground. Discussion focused primarily on the institutional framework within which a special representative operates as well as the quality of the appointments and the political support a special representative received from the Council.

In the context of the **institutional framework** within which the special representative operates, four key relationships were identified where greater consultation and cooperation would enhance the special representative's performance on the ground.

First, and most importantly, the dialogue between the special representative and the Council needs to be improved. Currently, the only interaction between the two takes place during reporting periods. It was suggested that more informal meetings between the Council and special representatives might encourage a more fluid exchange of views.

Second, special representatives must regulate their relationship with resident coordinators in order to avoid useless competition and even open conflict. One participant emphasized the need to clarify the respective areas of responsibility and functions. Another suggested a clearer division of labour, according to which the special representative would concentrate on "sharpening the political focus of the Secretary-General" without becoming mired in the micromanagement of relief and reconstruction activities, a job that should be left to the resident coordinator.

Third, there is a need to clarify the relationship between special representatives with overlapping mandates (such as regional and national special representatives). This overlap can occasionally cause confusion — on occasion a lack of coordination can lead to a competitive rather than a complementary approach to issues of mutual concern.

Fourth, special representatives have to liaise more closely with the government(s) of their target country and the region. Given that special representatives must "hit the ground running", it was suggested that special representatives, prior to being deployed, should be routinely required to visit key regional and other relevant capitals. Such activities were sometimes constrained by

resource limitations, but great benefits could be reaped from a comparatively small expense.

Such political problems underlined the occasional lack of diplomatic experience that undermined the efforts of some special representatives. That raised more generally the question of what the Secretary-General should look for in a candidate. While insisting that the Secretary-General's prerogative to appoint his representatives should not be infringed, some participants noted critically that, in the past, the **quality of the Secretary-General's choices for his special representatives** had been uneven. Structural impediments sometimes stand in the way of attracting top-level personnel for these positions. Special representatives often have to operate in unattractive conflict regions. At the same time, some Governments are reluctant to free high-quality personnel for the United Nations. One ambassador said he would like to see more Council involvement in the appointment process, although other participants feared that that would cause more political problems than it would solve.

Participants further argued that a special representative's success to a large extent depended upon the **support from Security Council** countries he or she received on the ground as well as in New York. Aldo Ajello in Mozambique, Yasushi Akashi in Cambodia and Lakhdar Brahimi in Haiti were relatively successful in spite of rather weak institutional positions in part due to such strong support from Member States.

Finally, the issue of **gender and regional representation** was also raised. While a number of special representatives serving in Africa are not of African origin, there was currently only one African special representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, deployed outside the borders of Africa. Even more striking, only one deputy special representative is female, an imbalance that the United Nations should seek to redress in the future.